DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 725 IR 020 488

AUTHOR	Lynch, William; Corry, Michael; Koffenberger, William
TITLE	Web-Based Distance Education: Faculty Recruitment and Training.
PUB DATE	1999-10-00
NOTE	7p.; In: WebNet 99 World Conference on the WWW and Internet Proceedings (Honolulu, Hawaii, October 24-30, 1999); see IR 020 454.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Faculty; Computer Uses in Education; *Distance Education; Educational Change; Educational Technology; *Faculty Development; *Faculty Recruitment; Higher Education; Problems; Training; *World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS	George Washington University DC; *Web Based Instruction

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the need for changes in higher education staffing for World Wide Web-based distance education, identifies obstacles to those changes, and proposes strategies for overcoming the obstacles. The first section discusses faculty recruitment, including new possibilities created by Web-based distance technologies and alternative paradigms of distance learning. The second section considers obstacles to recruitment success. The third section addresses faculty training for distance education, and the fourth section covers obstacles to training success. The fifth section presents a faculty development case study: the Instructional Technology Laboratory at George Washington University (District of Columbia). (Contains 16 references.) (MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

G.H. Marks

Web-based Distance Education: Faculty Recruitment and Training

Dr. William Lynch, Center for Distance and Mediated Learning,
The George Washington University, U.S.A. (blynch@gwu.edu)

Dr. Michael Corry, Educational Technology Leadership Program,
The George Washington University, U.S.A. (mcorry@gwu.edu)

Mr. William Koffenberger, Instructional Technology Lab,
The George Washington University, U.S.A. (billkoff@gwu.edu)

ED 448 725

Abstract : Web-based Distance Education requires skills that transcend traditional teaching methods and most faculty currently employed in higher education do not possess these required skills. An aggressive strategy of training and recruitment is required to create a professoriate which possesses the wisdom of traditional faculties and the technological skills required to effectively communicate in the future. This paper examines the need for changes in higher education staffing, identifies obstacles to those changes, and proposes strategies for overcoming those obstacles.

Introduction

As we move forward toward the new millennium, pressure for changing roles among faculty is a significant predictor of the attention that must be given to the planned preparation of those faculty. Few individuals, however, have examined faculty recruitment and training issues for Web-based distance education specifically. Yet, this topic is of intense interest to practitioners, researchers and administrators alike as higher education struggles to transform itself in a market sensitive manner. The role of Web-based distance education in this change is an important area to examine.

Faculty Recruitment

Traditionally, faculty have been hired to work on a campus or in a school building. This often required a deep financial and logistical commitment on the part of the organization and the individual to develop and sustain a relationship. Universities and colleges have historically treated faculty hiring as a decision with a significant and long term impact on the educational direction of the academic unit. Hiring a full-time faculty member was as much a philosophical decision about programmatic futures as it was a personnel action. Employment was not an action entered into lightly by either the institution or the individual. Adjunct professorial hiring added some flexibility to the activity of faculty recruitment, but the pool was usually limited to local talent. In non-metropolitan areas, finding qualified adjuncts was at least difficult, if not impossible.

Web-based distance technologies and alternative paradigms of distance learning create exciting new possibilities for staffing. Although universities have been hesitant to exploit these possibilities, a number of options are inherent in the larger pool of talent made accessible to institutions of learning.

- Distance technologies make it possible to record and/or distribute expert knowledge in ways which expand upon the use of traditional books and papers.
- Web-based text, graphics, online conferencing software, streaming audio and streaming video make dynamic expert knowledge accessible to not only appropriately equipped classrooms, but thousands of remote sites, including homes and offices.
- Courses can be conducted and managed by part-time faculty even if they live hundreds of miles away.
- Remote access benefits full-time faculty directly by offering greater flexibility when they need to be away from campus for field research, conferences, or other travel reasons.

IR020488

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Additionally, these approaches can be combined in collaborative teaching models to permit faculty from multiple campuses to teach together to a group composed of representatives of each home campus and others.

Even when they are hired on a very limited basis part-time content experts greatly enhance the knowledge base available to any program of study. Consequently , the demand of market forces is prodding a gentle exploration of these innovative ideas in spite of the uncertainty of university reward and recognition structures.

The new talent pool evolving from Web-based distance technologies creates opportunities for innovative recruitment strategies and options (Marquardt & Kearsley 1998). All institutions, even those that are small and remote, can advertise nationally for expert faculty to expand or complement their core faculty resources. Recruitment can be designed to attract faculty to teach entire courses or special modules, which only require modest time and effort, but special expertise. A more diverse faculty can be attracted to cover topics from a unique regional, cultural, or ideological perspective. Retired faculty can continue to participate in the life of the university as they are needed, and as they desire, from wherever they may have relocated. Large numbers of students in one class can be managed by one regular faculty who manages the course and others who contribute their special expertise and share the load for interactivity and evaluation. Some faculty can be hired exclusively for course design, while others are hired for instruction. Whether the model is individually oriented or team oriented, distance technologies mean that a more diverse, better qualified, more talented, and flexible pool of potential faculty can become available to all institutions.

The net result of more faculty and more institutions vying for their participation will be more competition. Institutional loyalty and proximity are still factors in faculty decision making, but incentives will become increasingly important especially as a professional group of free-market distance educators emerges. Institutions that wish to recruit the best and the brightest faculty will be well advised to follow traditional lessons in the context of a new reality. Faculty teaching at a distance will not be enticed by a move to a cultural center or research facilities, they are more likely to be enticed by a situation which provides them a great deal of flexibility. They may be motivated by an institutional affiliation with an institution renowned for excellence in traditional and distance programs, but they will certainly be motivated by those institutions with the most interesting curriculum options, best support services, and most enticing compensation packages. Regardless of the reputation of an institution, a recruiting strategy which attracts high quality faculty who are available, skilled, and willing to follow institutional policies is essential and must be carefully planned and executed.

Obstacles to Recruitment Success

Even a willing and capable workforce will not eradicate a bevy of serious and contentious issues which will continue to plague efforts at academic reform. Strategies such as those outlined above will conflict with traditional wisdom and practices of most higher education institutions. First among these are the dual problems of promotion and tenure. Most institutions do not have clear policies which address the decision weight for the significant efforts required for development and delivery of web based learning materials. This ambiguity will continue to be a disincentive for many non-tenured faculty to participate in web based learning activities. Experienced and tenured faculty will likewise be deterred by the threat to job security posed by a recruiting strategy which focuses on performance criteria not general institutional status. Furthermore, what is to be done if there are tenured faculty who refuse to perform web-based teaching activities or who perform poorly when asked to do so? Will faculty roles be differentiated based on ability? Will faculty work in teams?

Special work agreements with performance specifications and the necessity of course and faculty evaluations for purposes of quality assurance with part-time faculty, will also threaten some traditional notions of academic freedom. There are also concerns that a few high profile – high status faculty may dominate the instructional world of the web as an academic superstars; thus, attracting most students to their course to the detriment of other arguably superior learning opportunities. Also of interest is how intellectual property and compensation decisions will be adjudicated when intellectual wares may go to the highest bidder.

Faculty Training

Large and financially affluent institutions will have an advantage in recruiting not only the most knowledgeable faculty, but also the most skilled at Web-based distance education. Nevertheless, recruitment alone will not suffice in creating a faculty

prepared for a web based learning environment. All educational institutions will need to commit to faculty training as a core part of their academic activity. While some education and training can be delivered at a distance by even the unimitiated, normal communications skills are inadequate to achieve effective learning results across the diverse methods of distance education.

To achieve a high performance solution, it is imperative that a systematic approach be applied to the planning and development of distance learning materials, instructional methods, and communications infrastructure (Laney 1996). It is precisely because learners and faculty are physically separated in a web-based learning environment, that course structure and materials must be developed in a systematic manner that reduces the possibilities of misinterpretation and confusion. Traditional course preparation efforts range dramatically among higher education faculty. Many faculty prepare little more than a topical syllabus and allow lessons to emerge from classroom interaction coupled with the personal expertise of the faculty. Other faculty prepare learning objectives, activities, and materials, but few have training in these endeavors. These traditional approaches are not sufficient to engender high quality web based instruction.

In general, the best technique for learning to use distance education technologies is practice. Skill development evolves over time in real life situations. It is a good idea to have faculty participate as learners or observers in settings which use distance education strategies, then have them contribute information or lessons to an existing class. Finally, allow new distance faculty to design and develop a lesson without the pressure of having to deliver the actual lesson. A great deal will be learned by actually going through all the steps involved.

Generally, new faculty need to learn how to establish and maintain contact at a distance. They should attempt to create situations in which they reach out to the clients personally as though they were writing a letter. They should think about engaging the clients and communicating to them by anticipating their questions and confusion. Finally, new faculty should determine how they can best evaluate learning in a distance context. The signs are different, but the students' needs are the same. Obviously, the institution should provide as much help and support as possible to these efforts on the part of faculty, but it is the individual that must do the thinking.

Videotape for asynchronous Web-based delivery involves some kind of studio or field production of a presentation, electronic field trip, or demonstration and variations on these themes for delivery to clients to view at their convenience. Faculty should watch several examples of high quality examples (within the production guidelines of the institutional producer) to begin conceptualizing the kind of production that can and should be accomplished. Next the faculty should work with a director to create several simple samples of on camera work, listening carefully to the director's advice. The samples should be reviewed with the director and redone for comparison purposes. Finally, some samples should be created and shared with colleagues and students for feedback. The production guidelines for each institution will dictate a good deal about what can and can't be done, but these should always be stretched in the interest of good quality instruction.

World Wide Web based text with graphics for asynchronous delivery is the distribution of HTML documents through the Internet for remote viewing and reading. Skill development with the World Wide Web is different that with video production; most important for faculty is the ability to plan and design learning resources that work well within a hypertext and hypermedia environment. This is most efficiently accomplished through the use of an instructional designer or similar support person. Faculty may also want to develop skill in HTML coding, in order to quickly update documents and add resources. HTML knowledge is not essential, but should be provided as a support resources by the institution for document creation.

Computer based conferencing for asynchronous delivery is the use of a computer based system for communicating through the use of electronic mail, newsgroups, or web based conferencing. Almost all faculty now use some form of electronic communications for sharing information. There are techniques that need to be developed to make this work effectively. Most important is the development of a careful communication style that does not inadvertently offend. It is also essential that skills in file transfer and attachment be developed as well.

Faculty are not likely to seek out assistance in learning these techniques without some motivation and encouragement by the institution. It is imperative that institutions establish a comprehensive faculty development program and require those faculty who want to participate in distance learning to participate. Faculty with well developed skills and experience will work with confidence and effectively represent the institution.

Obstacles to Training Success

Training to enhance specific job performance and skill development for a changing workplace are not easily accommodated in higher education settings. Faculty have traditionally been difficult to train for a variety of reasons; status, ego, self-confidence, and job definition are among them. Training and human development have been designated as activities best suited for staff. Attitudes are changing among faculty who see skill enhancement as a means to an end, but there are many who perceive that participation in training initiatives as the first step in changing faculty roles. Faculty roles are changing rapidly; it is imperative that training programs position themselves as opportunities for faculty survival and not vehicles for faculty demise.

Many faculty are also reluctant to be trained in the midst of their peers for fear of embarrassment. This is especially true in technical areas where foundational knowledge and prior experience are prerequisites to rapid and successful learning. Consequently, many faculty desire individualized instruction which is expensive and often impossible to provide for everyone. Screening and confidence building activities are key strategies to training success. Activities should also provide tangible and immediate benefits to the lives of faculty participants. Nothing breeds success like prior success.

Human and equipment resources are only part of the limitation in delivering successful training experiences to faculty. Faculty in higher education have a range of responsibilities which create unusual schedules; it is difficult to find a time that meet the needs of a large number of faculty, especially during the academic year. Even when scheduling can be accomplished, situations of demand that faculty set priorities on their time and training opportunities usually come last. Identifying special high profile training opportunities during non-peak times, especially summer will provide some relief, but generally planning well in advance is the best strategy.

As with any group, faculty also come to learning opportunities with a diverse set of personal and professional goals and needs. For example, some faculty may want to know 'how to' do everything necessary to design and create a website for an on-line course; others may want to provide references on-line to supplement on site instruction. These are both appropriate goals, but with radically different training experiences and time commitments attached. Trainers must be sensitive to the needs of each in structuring learning experiences. In addition to diverse goals, faculty may have different learning needs as well, some will come with a lot of prior knowledge and experience, others with very little. It is extraordinarily difficult to meet the requirements of each individual; but training that is too generic may not meet the needs of anyone. It is imperative that faculty be screened for prior knowledge; training can then be designed at an appropriate level for an individual or group of faculty.

In addition to diverse goals and learning needs, faculty members also tend to lack a common culture of pedagogy. The structure of academic disciplines, prior teaching and learning experiences, culture background, general philosophy of life and formal pedagogical training all contribute to a faculty member's view of the teaching and learning process. Distance and mediated learning in general and web-based learning specifically, compel a systematic examination of our pedagogical underpinnings, but old and successful teaching methods don't yield easily.

May organizations find that equipment available for training is not available on faculty offices or home equipment. This is a daunting limitation. If faculty cannot practice and implement what they have learned, their interest, knowledge, and skills will soon atrophy. Efforts should be made to provide appropriate equipment to faculty who will use it, perhaps as a reward for successful training. If this is not an affordable alternative, then a facility with all appropriate equipment and staff should be provided as a central resource exclusively for faculty. Such a facility will permit faculty more resources than normally possible on the desktop and a retreat from interruptions.

Faculty Development Case Study: The Instructional Technology Laboratory

The Instructional Technology Lab was established in August of 1997 to provide the George Washington University faculty a resource to assist them in appropriate and desirable uses of instructional technologies. The ITL has evolved to offer a range of support services to the faculty that aim to effectively integrate instructional technologies into the academic program based upon a strong pedagogical foundation. Staff specialists in the ITL have instructional design, interface and graphics design, and teaching experience in traditional and mediated learning environments.

Physically, the ITL is an open environment that provides direct access to professional staff and equipment for faculty working on multimedia projects, redesigning curricula, or learning about new technologies. A complement of state of the art audio, video, and computer equipment provides faculty access to otherwise unavailable or expensive equipment. Designed for both group and individual faculty training, the physical composition of the ITL fosters cooperative project-oriented experimentation and development with a range of instructional technologies.

The earliest developmental stage of the ITL focused on development of the lab facilities. The lab supports computer, video, audio, and staff resources in a collaborative work environment. Faculty members are assisted in the creation of compelling, effective and high quality multimedia presentations and course materials.

The second stage of the ITL's development combined ITL facilities with technical workshops and presentations utilizing the computer labs, computer classrooms, and seminar rooms elsewhere on campus. Demonstrations of new technologies, emerging theories of learning and instruction, and different teaching strategies are organized and presented by ITL staff in coordination with other university units. Armed with this knowledge, faculty acquire an intellectual foundation as well as practical experiences with which they continue working with ITL staff to implement appropriate technologies into their teaching.

In responding to faculty needs, new opportunities have emerged to engage and work with faculty as they develop instructional technologies. One area of focus lies in online courseware tools. A system originally developed in the ITL and now being extended to the entire university community is *Prometheus*. This product allows faculty to easily create and manage Web based courses and course materials for both traditional and distance students. While courseware tools can facilitate and assist in Web based instruction, the ITL views its role as assisting faculty in determining why, when, and how to use this and other tools in an effective manner overcoming the relatively simple goal of 'getting my course on the Web'.

Recently, the ITL has been focusing on improving faculty development through a more systematic and proactive strategy. In cooperation with other university departments the Summer Intensive Workshop Initiative (SIWI) was created. This project draws on staff expertise and resources to provide faculty with an intensive 3 day series of workshops and seminars on teaching and learning with instructional technologies. The initiative seeks to provide specially tailored opportunities to faculty based on their skill level. In addition to the focused and intensive workshops, the SIWI effort includes follow-up support as faculty apply their new skills. Staff from the Instructional Technology Lab work individually with faculty on problem definition and project planning in addition to instructional design and technical support. The SIWI program has at its core an ambitious series of evaluative measures and plans call for a wider evaluation of the effectiveness of faculty use of instructional technologies in the classroom. In addition to the intensive workshops and follow-up support, the ITL is working to implement a grant program that will provide faculty with fiscal resources to accomplish their course development goals.

The ITL seeks to provide the university faculty with pedagogical, as well as technological, activities and projects that support high quality learning. To this end, the ITL staff constantly seek to improve their services and respond to faculty needs. Future projects of the ITL will include a metropolitan area symposium on effective uses of instructional technologies, an electronic journal focusing on faculty projects and successes, and the addition of fee based course design, technology integration, and materials development services. These efforts and future projects will focus attention on pedagogical issues and reflect the ability of the ITL staff to think 'outside the box' while providing custom solutions and approaches to complex instructional challenges.

Conclusion

As Web-based distance education continues to rapidly grow in popularity the issues of faculty recruitment and training are moving to the forefront of items that need to be addressed. Recruitment and training of faculty to teach in Web-based distance education environments differs from recruitment and training of faculty to teach in traditional environments.

References

Laney, J. (1996). Going the distance: Effective instruction using distance learning technologies. *Educational Technology*. March-April, 1996.

Marquardt, M. J. & Kearsley, G. (1998) *Technology Based Learning*. CRC Press LLC.